

**CITY OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
MINUTES**

Thursday, December 9, 2021
555 S 10th Street, 1st Floor
City County Building, Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER:

The December 9, 2021, meeting of the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Carlos Garcia, Chair.

ROLL CALL:

The roll was called.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioners: Carlos Garcia (Chair), Kevin Abourezk, Sheri Blok, Emira Ibrahimasic and Davetta Nelson.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Commissioners: Rose Godinez, Alyssa Martin, Jolene McCulley and Terry Werner.

STAFF PRESENT:

Marna Munn, Mindy Rush Chipman, Rob Rowan, Chassidy Jackson-Goodwin, Francisca Beltran, Haefaa Hasan and Shanna Eckman.

APPROVAL OF October 28, 2021, MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ibrahimasic and seconded by Blok to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Hearing no discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF December 9, 2021, AGENDA:

A motion was made by Ibrahimasic and seconded by Abourezk to approve the meeting agenda.

Hearing no discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

CASE DISPOSITIONS:

LCHR # 21-0408-006-E-R

A motion was made by Ibrahimasic and seconded by Abourezk to recommend a finding of **no reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Abourezk noted that there was no direct evidence that the employer denied the Complainant a reasonable accommodation. Ibrahimasic pointed out that the request for the accommodation was supposed to go through a different office and not the manager or supervisor, but that the Complainant did not submit the request to the appropriate office.

Garcia agreed with the previous points, saying there might have also been a miscommunication between the individuals involved.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

LCHR # 21-0511-005-H

A motion was made by Abourezk and seconded by Blok to recommend a finding of **reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Abourezk was concerned about the lack of evidence supplied by the Respondent; they had claimed many things but did not provide supporting evidence. Abourezk asked Munn how the Commission should proceed if requested evidence was not supplied; Munn explained that subpoenaing the information was a possibility but that the Commission also could draw a negative inference from Respondent’s lack of cooperation. Abourezk stated that they had a hard time believing that if the Respondent had evidence that would exonerate them, that they would refuse to provide it.

Ibrahimasic expressed how frustrating it was that the Respondent refused to provide evidence. It seemed to make the renter’s score arbitrary because it allowed the Respondent to choose whomever they wanted in order to qualify. Ibrahimasic also found it concerning the amount of fees that the Respondent implemented on the Complainant after the Complainant moved out.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

LCHR # 21-0608-008-H

A motion was made by Garcia and seconded by Blok to recommend a finding of **reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Blok questioned if landlords were allowed to arbitrarily change the terms of a lease after it was signed. Munn noted that it was not usually permitted, but that the Respondent did not change the terms but rather sent a letter “interpreting” the terms of the lease.

Ibrahimasic expressed concern that the landlord assumed everyone in the neighborhood was Christian and not of other religions.

Abourezk noted that the text chain gave a significant amount of proof; Garcia and Ibrahimasic agreed.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

LCHR # 21-0608-009-H

A motion was made by Ibrahimasic and seconded by Abourezk to recommend a finding of **reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Ibrahimasic and Blok questioned if there was a “limit” of people allowed on the property. Investigator Rowan noted that the Respondent said the “limit” was whoever was listed on the lease. Munn added that it isn’t often where a “limit” is applied to a lease but that there are guidelines as to how many people can occupy a property.

Abourezk stated that the Respondent refusing to even consider adding the Complainant to the lease after the altercation made it seem as if there were discrimination involved. Garcia agreed that it was difficult to separate the two allegations because they were so tied together.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

LCHR # 21-0715-010-H

A motion was made by Ibrahimasic and seconded by Nelson to recommend a finding of **reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Blok questioned if the voicemails were explicit enough; Ibrahimasic thought that the combination of the “favors” and the voicemails made it seem that the Respondent was referring to quid pro quo. Abourezk also noted that there was a pattern of repetition from the Respondent towards the Complainant.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

LCHR # 21-0720-011-H

A motion was made by Abourezk and seconded by Ibrahimasic to recommend a finding of **reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Abourezk stated that the evidence made it pretty clear that the Respondent did not like kids; Garcia agreed that the two test calls provided evidence that the Respondent was not interested in accommodating families or individuals with disabilities.

Hearing no further discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting “aye” were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Outreach:

Beltran reports that the presentations to all Lincoln High School Take Charge classes have resumed.

Rent Wise and LCHR shows have also resumed, but will be done remotely via Zoom instead of in person.

My City Academy just finished its second session which was completely virtual; it connects new Americans to resources in Lincoln. The next cohort will hopefully be in-person in 2022.

The Civil Rights Conference (CRC2022) is scheduled for April 20, 2022, including a full day preconference on April 19, 2022.

NEW BUSINESS:

Director Report

Chipman thanked outgoing Chair Garcia for his six years of service to the Commission and the community of Lincoln.

A grant was secured to supply iPads for Commissioners to make it easier to review the cases and cut down on paper waste.

Mayoral Aide Adelle Burke gave a presentation about Gateways for Growth. Gateways for Growth is focused on creating a welcoming and inclusion plan for immigrants and refugees in Lincoln. It includes NATF (New Americans Task Force) and Career Ladder, of which MyCity Academy, the Connectors Program, and the Career Pathway Guides are a part of.

Elections

Garcia nominated Ibrahimasic for Chair and Blok for Vice Chair, effective January 1, 2022. There were no other nominations presented.

A motion was made by Garcia and seconded by Abourezk to elect Ibrahimasic as Chair.

Ibrahimasic expressed her desire and enthusiasm to accept as Chair.

Hearing no discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Garcia and seconded by Ibrahimasic to elect Blok as Vice Chair.

Blok stated she was excited for the opportunity and noted that there were good examples of Vice Chair before her.

Hearing no discussion, Garcia asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Garcia, Abourezk, Blok, Ibrahimasic and Nelson. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Garcia expressed his thanks to the Director and Staff for allowing him the opportunity to serve on Commission.

A public comment was made by Bobbi Fagan. As the comment directly dealt with a specific case and the Commission, they were asked by Chair Garcia to contact the Investigator they were working with.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, January 27, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.
555 S. 10th Street, 1st Floor, Council Chambers